

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02231 120759Z

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 COME-00 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3982

INFO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

UNCLAS BEIRUT 2231

DAMASCUS FOR AGATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD

SUBJECT: US-LEBANESE TRADE AND TOBACCO

REF: DAMASCUS 2903

1. ON MAY 9, EMBASSY RECEIVED NOTE FROM GOL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS REQUESTING OUR ASSISTANCE IN URGING AMERICAN COMPANIES INTERESTED IN THE PURCHASE OF LEBANESE TOBACCO TO RESUME VISITS TO BEIRUT.

2. ACCORDING TO THIS NOTE, RECENT EVENTS IN LEBANON HAVE LED AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANIES PARTICULARLY PHILIP MORRIS, TO SEND THEIR PURCHASING AGENTS TO CYPRUS WHERE THEY HAVE MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEBANESE REGIE DE TABAC, INSPECTED THE TOBACCO AND ARRANGED PURCHASES. THE MINISTRY NOW REQUESTS THE EMBASSY TO RECOMMEND TO THESE COMPANIES THAT THEY NOW SEND THEIR PURCHASING AGENTS TO BEIRUT SINCE "THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH REQUIRED THE TRANSFER OF NEGOTIATIONS TO CYPRUS HAVE DISAPPEARED."

3. COMMENT: THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIE DE TABAC
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ARE VERY INTERESTED IN THE SALE OF LEBANON'S TOBACCO CROP (SEE REFTEL). FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, BECAUSE OF THE FIGHTING IN LEBANON, FOREIGN BUYERS OF LEBANESE TOBACCO HAVE REFUSED TO COME TO BEIRUT, HAVE INSISTED INSTEAD THE TOBACCO BE SHIPPED TO CYPRUS FOR INSPECTION AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS TAKE PLACE THERE. DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS, BOTH MINISTER OF FINANCE RAPHAEL AND DR. PHILLIP SERHAL, THE PRESIDENT

OF THE REGIE DE TABAC, HAVE COMPLAINED TO THE DCM THAT THIS PROCEDURE IS VERY EXPENSIVE AND INCONVENIENT FOR THEM AND ASKED IF EMBASSY COULD NOT PURSUADE US COMPANIES TO DO THEIR INSPECTION AND NEGOTIATIONS IN LEBANON.

4. EMBASSY CAN APPRECIATE RELUCTANCE OF AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANIES TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO BEIRUT DURING PAST TWO YEARS. SINCE NOVEMBER, 1976, HOWEVER, THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND ADJACENT AREAS HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED. ALTHOUGH ISOLATED INCIDENTS STILL OCCUR, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THERE IS NO REASON IN PRINCIPLE WHY AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY REPS COULD NOT COME TO LEBANON. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF AMERICAN BANKERS IN RESIDENCE HERE AND A STEADY STREAM OF AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN PASSING THROUGH. IF REPRESENTATIVES OF SUCH US COMPANIES WOULD INFORM THE EMBASSY A WEEK OR SO IN ADVANCE OF PLANNED VISIT, WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO GIVE THEM OUR LATEST READING ON SECURITY SITUATION.
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Message Attributes

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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770572/aaaacjws.tel
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History: Hold (001 Tobacco) added on 4/16/2009 3:38:59 PM by WASHDCMcGoldRJ, Hold (001 Tobacco) removed on 4/16/2009 3:45:05 PM by WASHDCMcGoldRJ (Litigation Hold Lifted)
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